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Letter dated 11 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan hosted the International Freshwater Forum in Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan, from 29 August to 1 September 2003. The Forum was organized in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the Governments of the United States of America and Switzerland and the Aga Khan Foundation. The Forum was dedicated to the International Year of Freshwater, 2003, and its theme was "Water, environment and security".

The Forum was attended by almost 500 delegates from 53 countries, 11 specialized agencies and 91 international organizations. More than 250 journalists from various countries of the world covered the Forum.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed a letter of greeting to the delegates at the Forum.

Eighteen side events took place during the Forum, which offered opportunities for a broad exchange of views among Governments, civil society, leading scientists and water experts. From the viewpoint of the delegates' dialogue, cooperation and a joint search for the solution of the "water" problems that have been accumulating in today's interdependent world were the focus of the Forum.

Forum participants adopted the coordinated Dushanbe Water Appeal, which I have the honour to forward to you (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under item 97 of the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session.

(*Signed*) Rashid **Alimov**
Ambassador

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Annex to the letter dated 11 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

DUSHANBE WATER APPEAL

Freshwater is essential for daily life and integrity of ecosystems and is a key to sustainable development and poverty reduction. At the Millennium Summit in 2000 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, world leaders recognized the importance of freshwater and committed themselves to a clear and time-bound agenda for protecting the world's current and future water resources, promoting sanitation and addressing environment issues.

The International Year of Freshwater 2003, declared by UN General Assembly at the initiative of the Government of Tajikistan, has further raised the awareness for freshwater problems and the urgent need for their resolution. Using the momentum, this year should mark a transition from commitments and promises to actions and implementation.

The vital nature of water makes it a basis for cooperation between people and nations. Integrated water management should be used to promote stability, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Countries should share knowledge, experience and technologies for the rational and effective use of water resources, and countries sharing the same river basin should work jointly to protect and utilize this common resource to improve the economic and social well being of all the people living in these basins.

* * *

We, the participants of the Dushanbe International Fresh Water Forum, representing governments, scientific and educational institutions, local authorities, non-governmental and international organizations, private businesses,

Reaffirm our commitment to support and implement actions towards maximizing the contribution of water to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to the realizations of targets agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

We call upon all stakeholders, especially those present here, to ***commit themselves*** to achieving the MDGs and the targets and actions agreed under the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation by:

- targeting actions in water management to the reduction of poverty and the promotion of gender equity;
- implementing integrated water resources management, based on an ecosystem approach, considering the interests of all sectors benefiting from water resources (energy, agriculture, industry, environment, water supply and sanitation, etc.);

- working towards developing and implementing effective agreements for the management of transboundary and/or boundary watercourses, while building further on international frameworks agreed so far and making river basin organizations more effective in terms of their capacities to implement their mandates and functions;
- enhancing the efficiency of hydroelectric production and distribution capacities to increase the share of renewable energy with due consideration of environmental and social impacts;
- pursuing innovative and pro-poor resource mobilization strategies, including the implementation of efficient water pricing policies, charging for ecosystem services and forging partnerships, including with the private sector, that give priority to the needs of the poor;
- promoting the sustainable use and restoration of water related ecosystems such as a contribution to achieving the WSSD biological diversity goal of a significant reduction to its current rate of loss by 2010;
- raising public awareness to provide present and future generations with information on effective responses to the challenges of the new millennium;
- promoting the exchange of information on the equitable and efficient use of water resources and efficient resource allocation among water uses;
- making use of the website network established after the 3rd World Water Forum in the follow up of the Portfolio of Water Actions announced at the Ministerial Conference.

We take note of the decisions and appeals made by the Heads of States of the Central Asian Region with regard to various regional initiatives, including the establishment of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea as means to coordinate and improve the management of regional water resources.

We welcome the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to declare 2003 as an International Year of Fresh Water in response to the resolution moved by the Government of Tajikistan, and ***express*** our appreciation for the commendable efforts made by the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Dushanbe International Fresh Water Forum as part of the events of this year.

We appeal to the United Nations to follow up the finding and recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development dealing with water, sanitation and human settlements by declaring the period of 2005 through 2015 as the International Decade of "Water for Life". ***We request*** the Government of Tajikistan to bring this proposal to the attention of the UN General Assembly as a contribution to the follow-up of the International Year of Fresh Water.

We call upon Governments, international agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders to make it a decade of action by taking concrete measures that contribute to:

- reducing by half the proportion of people without access to adequate and safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015;
- improving the health conditions to reduce the risks that lead to the death of 2 million children every year due to poor access to safe drinking water;
- protecting the resource base both in terms of quantity and quality to ensure that present and future generations are able to sustain their lives on the planet;
- mobilizing and investing adequate resources to finance drinking water supply and sanitation; and
- moving from preparation of water management plans to their implementation, with a focus on increasing water productivity in agriculture and water supply and sanitation.

Adopted by the participants of the Dushanbe International Freshwater Forum on the 1st of September 2003.